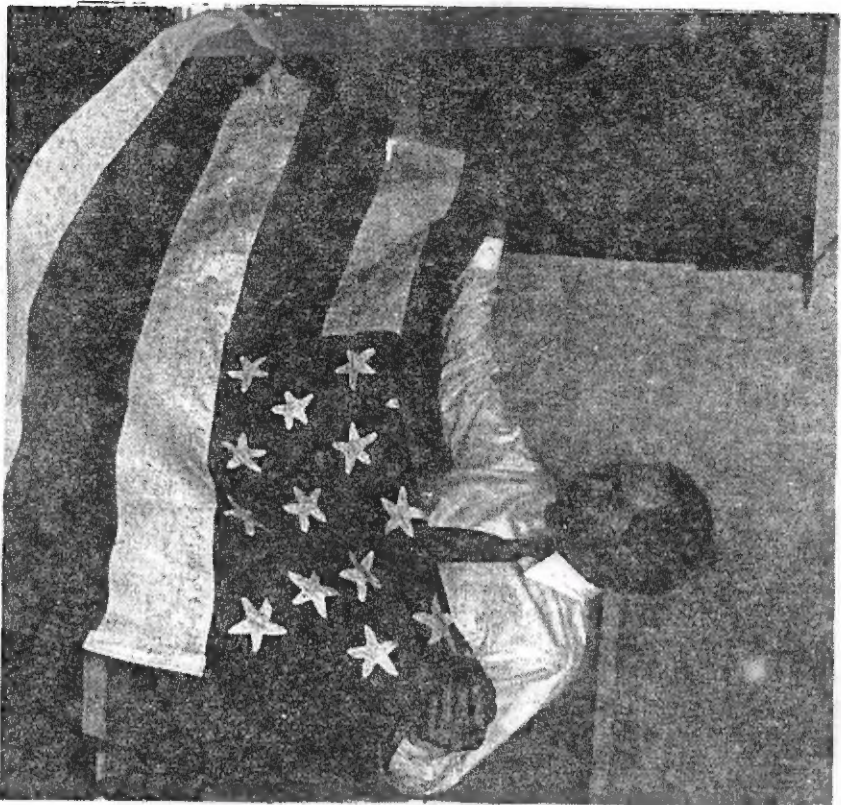


# — The Fort Midway Flag —



Author David Epperson displays the flag that was made by his great great grandmother to be used during the Blackhawk War. Midway's Old Band.

Faded, collecting dust, and ignored for several decades, on the second floor of the Midway Town Hall is perhaps the most historically significant artifact of Midway history: an eighteen star American flag. It was the first flag to fly at Fort Midway and it was carried on campaign throughout the Blackhawk Indian War of 1866 and 1867 by the Midway Battalion of the Wasatch Military District.

This article has been written to bring about a greater awareness of the existence and historical significance of this flag and to encourage an appropriate site for its public display and preservation.

On the southeast corner of the Midway Town Square is a monument that was erected on July 21, 1940, by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers which bears this inscription:

MIDWAY FORT

When this valley was settled in 1859 two colonies were established on the west side of the Provo River. A lower and upper settlement, the latter called Mound City.

In 1866 Indian depredations caused the formation of the Wasatch County Military District and brought the people of the two settlements together for security. About seventy-five families erected homes on this site.

Sidney H. Epperson was the presiding elder. The location being Midway between the two sites, by common usage became Midway.

As this monument notes, Midway was created in response to dangers generated by "Indian depredations" which arose out of the Blackhawk Indian War. Although this war originated many miles to the south in Sanpete and Sevier Counties,

where Chief Blackhawk incited the Ute Tribes to wage war on the encroaching settlers, the hostilities endangered other remote settlements including those struggling to establish themselves in the Heber Valley.

When Brigham Young heard of the bloodshed and destruction of the war to the south, he advised his people in sparsely-settled districts to move together and to build forts for protection and security. At the time of Brigham Young's decree there were two colonies of settlers on the west side of the Heber Valley. The first colony was established on April 15, 1859, at a cottonwood grove on the banks of Snake Creek with the arrival of the Sidney Epperson, Jeremiah Robey, Mark Smith, David Wood, and Jesse McCarrel families. The second colony was established one year later, during the summer of 1860,



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when the Peter Shirts, Ephraim Hanks, Jno Hanks, and Riggs families arrived in the valley and settled some four miles above the first colony on Snake Creek. This upper settlement later came to be known as Mound City, presumably having been named by John Huber. After 1860 numerous other families arrived, locating on the west side of the Heber Valley and up and down Snake Creek for four miles. Sidney H. Epperson was appointed presiding Elder over the colonists on June 26, 1862, and by 1864 it is estimated that fifty-six families were members of the two settlements.

Giving heed to Brigham Young decree, the settlers on the western half of the Heber Valley agreed in principle that they should band together in one location to build a fort for mutual protection and security. However, the upper settlement colonists the lower settlement colonists did not feel like moving to the upper settlement.

In the spring of 1866, under the direction of presiding Elder Sidney H. Epperson, a compromise location was selected halfway between the two settlements and they commenced to "fort in". The name Fort Sidney was reportedly first suggested in honor of their leader and met with unanimous approval, but Sidney said, "No,

we'll call it Midway."

The first step in laying out the fort and settlement was the survey of the townsite. John Huber and Sidney Epperson carried the tape, Mark Smith and Attewall Wootton the pegs, and within a few days Midway was laid out in large blocks thirty-two rods square, with a Main Street six rods wide and side streets four rods in width. A public square where the fort settlement was to be placed was set aside in the center of the new town site, and within a matter of weeks, through a tremendous community effort, seventy-five primitive dirt roofed log cabins were constructed surrounding the central square. Some cabins abutted each other, while in some instances strong panels of upright posts made palisades between cabins built slightly apart, forming an impregnable wall around the square. Small rear windows were to serve as portholes in case of attack. The inner six acres of the square were enclosed with a heavy pole fence, typical of the old pioneers, which was used as a corral for the protection of the livestock at night.

As Fort Midway was nearing completion, Major General Robert T. Burton and his Chief of Staff, Colonel D. J. Ross of Salt Lake City, made a trip to the valley for the purpose of